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ADMIRALTY ISLAND RECREATIONAL AREA

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
FOREST SERVICE



TONGASS NATIONAL FOREST
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TONGASS NATIONAL FORESTADMIRALTY ISLAND RECREATIONAL AREA1936LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION:

Admiralty Island, in the Tongass National Forest, is one of the large islands of Southeastern Alaska, having a length north and south of ninety-six miles and a maximum width of thirty miles. The lower elevations are well covered with valuable commercial timber of spruce and hemlock. The major drainages of the east and west coasts are separated by a chain of mountains, with a succession of peaks having a maximum elevation of four thousand feet. This range is broken in the center by a lowland area which extends across the island in a northeast-southwest direction. It is this lowland, generously dotted with beautiful lakes ranging in size from small ponds to several square miles in extent, that comprises the recreational area shown on the attached map.

ATTRACTIONS - WHAT THE AREA HAS TO OFFER:

Excellent fishing, hunting (under restrictions), boating, hiking, kodak hunting, and mountain climbing. While the area is a primitive wilderness, it has been made accessible by a system of trails, portages, and shelter cabins. An outing can be made restful and mild or strenuous and wild, to suit the temperament of the individual. It offers a typical bit of Southeastern Alaska flora and fauna, attractive to the sportsman, the nature lover, and the student. Here we have an easy intimacy and close contact with wild life, especially deer, and there is always a possibility for those who wish to catch a glimpse of a brown bear amid his home surroundings.

ACCESSIBILITY:

The interior lake region is most easily reached by sea planes which are available for hire in Juneau and Ketchikan at reasonable rates. It requires about thirty minutes to reach the lake area from Juneau by plane, and less than two hours from Ketchikan. Fishing parties traveling to and from the lakes by plane have little chance of encountering a bear, or even seeing one.

Another way of reaching this lake region from the coast towns is by motor boat to the island, and from there to the lakes over the foot trails. It is generally possible to charter boats suitable for this trip in Juneau, Petersburg, Wrangell, and Ketchikan. From Juneau one should plan upon from nine to ten hours of average motor boat travel before reaching the harbors where the trails begin. A good hiker can walk from Mole Harbor to Lake Alexander in forty minutes, or from Windfall Harbor to Hasselborg Lake in three hours. This way of reaching the interior of the island has much to recommend it for those who have time and are willing to endure a little healthful physical weariness which comes from open air exertion.

THE TRAIL SYSTEM:

Three main trails lead from tidewater to the lakes. There are shelter cabins at the inland terminal of each. One of these trails, beginning at Mole Harbor, on Seymour Canal, leads to Lake Alexander, a distance of two and seven-tenths miles. A second trail leads from Windfall Harbor to Hasselborg Lake, a distance of seven miles, or on to Thayer Lake in sixteen miles. The third trail in this group connects Mitchell Bay, Kootznahoo Inlet, on the west coast of the island, with Davidson Lake, a distance of four miles.

Trails one and three are recommended for fishermen, and two for those who are interested in hiking, and in deer hunting during the open season. From the inland termini of these trails the entire lake system of the recreational area is made accessible by trails and portages between lakes. The beach termini have markers to indicate their location.

Portages will be found between Beaver Lake and Hasselborg Lake, Guerin Lake and Distin Lake, and Davidson Lake and Distin Lake. There is a portage trail

from the head of Oliver Inlet to the head of Seymour Canal, one mile in length, with an overnight shelter cabin at the Seymour Canal terminal. This makes it possible for outboard motor or canoe travelers to reach the lake region on Admiralty Island from Juneau without too much difficulty: Eight miles south in Gastineau Channel to Marmion Island, thence across Stephens Passage to Oliver Inlet where the portage will put one in Seymour Canal. A light canoe, or enough man-power to take a skiff or heavier craft across the portage, must be provided. Oliver Inlet can be entered only at half tide or higher as tidal currents are strong, the entrance quite restricted, and below half tide the water has insufficient depth for traveling. From the head of Seymour Canal it is an easy trip to Windfall or Mole Harbor, where trails lead to the interior of the island.

SHELTER CABINS:

Seven cabins, built and maintained by the Forest Service, offer shelter to the traveler. They are log and shake structures with one side open, resembling the Baker shelter tent, adaptable for camp fire heating and cooking. The fuel supply necessary for a camp fire is a much easier problem than for a stove, and fish stories are always taller and better when told around a good camp fire. There are no cooking utensils or provisions for sleeping at these cabins.

LODGE:

A central lodge, built by the Forest Service, is located on the east side of Hasselborg Lake at a point where the lake narrows and a prominent point of land makes a proper setting for the structure. This also, is a log building. It is fourteen by twenty feet in size, of a design in keeping with its surroundings. The interior is divided into a living room (equipped with cook stove and cooking utensils, and hand pump for supplying water for domestic purposes) and two bedrooms with two double bunks in each room.

WILD LIFE:

Undoubtedly the most interesting form of wild life on Admiralty Island is the Alaskan Brown Bear. The island as a whole is well populated with these animals, but they are not plentiful in midsummer in the lake region with the exception of the north end of Hasselborg Lake and around Mitchell Bay. Normally, especially to a person accustomed to these bears and their habits, their presence, or a chance meeting, involves little danger. The natural instinct of a bear is to avoid mankind whenever possible. However, it is necessary to exercise some caution, and considerable good judgment, when meeting them under varying conditions in their own territory. Too close contact before discovery; a female with cubs; a close meeting in dense cover, especially with a bear recovering from fighting or gunshot wounds; a male and female together during the mating season, are all situations to be avoided. The bears on Admiralty Island are not semi-tame or "park bears" in any sense of the term.

Thoroughly understanding these conditions and in recognition thereof, the Alaska Game Commission requires non-residence hunters to be accompanied at all times by a registered guide, and further specifies that "No non-resident shall pursue or disturb a large brown or grizzly bear for the purpose of obtaining a photograph unless accompanied by a registered guide."

Residents of Alaska are not required to have a guide but are advised not to travel extensively on foot on the island unless experienced and properly armed. Shooting at bears on Admiralty Island during the closed season is prohibited, unless absolutely unavoidable, and a full report to the Alaska Game Commission will be required if shooting occurs. Bear hunting is prohibited at all times within the Thayer Mountain and the Pack Creek closed areas, as shown on the accompanying map.

OTHER FORMS OF WILD LIFE:

Sitka deer, a variety of the Columbian Blacktail, is very abundant on Admiralty Island and there are frequent opportunities for splendid camera shots at this beautiful animal. The beaver is another interesting mammal and there are many occasions when one can make camera studies of this little hydraulic engineer. Blue grouse, known locally as

"hooters", are quite common. Both the rock and willow ptarmigan are occasionally seen above timber line in summer. Several species of migratory birds, especially mallard ducks, and the White Cheeked Canadian geese, are common around tidewater, and by no means rare on the lakes.

FISHING:

Fishing in the lakes and streams of this island is rated as excellent, even in a country which is outstanding for its splendid trout fishing. It is only in the last few years that trout fishing in Hasselborg Lake has been known and enjoyed by local sportsmen. To leave Juneau by plane in the afternoon, arrive at the lakes and fish during the evening and early morning, and return before noon the following day, is becoming very popular. If one wishes to arrange a longer trip, that is easily done. Excellent cutthroat trout fishing is one of the principal attractions of this area, and the chief reason for its being established and improved as a recreation unit.

There is a trail about one mile in length from the lake outlet extending, for the convenience of fishermen, down Hasselborg River. The salt water areas surrounding Admiralty Island afford ample opportunity for the enjoyment of strip-fishing for salmon.

There are at present thirteen light cedar skiffs for public use on the area, well distributed at the various shelter cabins and portages. It is a requirement that each skiff shall be returned to the place from which it is taken.

PACK CREEK BEAR OBSERVATORY AND CAMERA STATION:

A strong secure platform with roof, guard rail, and seats, reached by an iron ladder, has been built by the Forest Service around the bole of a large spruce tree on the south bank of Pack Creek, about one-quarter mile from tidewater. This is the first creek north of Windfall Harbor, and is an excellent salmon stream much frequented by bears during the salmon spawning season. The station was built to afford a safe place of concealment in a favored location for photographing the bears while they are fishing in the stream.

There are two ways of reaching the observatory from the anchorage behind Windfall Island: An excellent foot trail marked by a sign on the beach at the anchorage, leading through the timber across the point direct to the observatory, or, one may follow the beach around to the mouth of the creek and from there proceed up the stream. The first route is recommended as less liable to disseminate human scent and disturb the bears. The beach and creek route is convenient at low tide only.

A wooden ladder was originally used to reach the platform but the lower part of this ladder being destroyed by bears, an iron one was substituted. All improvements are painted a forest green color and made as inconspicuous as possible. This sanctuary is intended only as a place in which to observe and photograph bears. Pack Creek drainage is closed to bear shooting.

FIRE:

The usual precautions and safety rules against fire on National Forests are enforced on Admiralty Island. While wet weather is common in Southeastern Alaska, during the summer months there are warm and dry periods during which fire will run freely. Fires in the interior of any of the large islands are costly to fight and difficult to extinguish. All camping parties should be equipped with a good axe and canvas water bucket.

IT MUST CONSTANTLY BE BORNE IN MIND THAT ONE BAD FIRE WILL DESTROY TIMBER AND SHELTER FOR WILD LIFE, BESIDES CONVERTING A BEAUTIFUL WOODLAND INTO A DREARY WASTE, THAT WILL TAKE HALF A LIFETIME TO REPLACE.

SAFETY:

Individuals, especially non-residents, should not wander around alone along the salmon streams in spawning season.

Each person should carry a map of the locality, a supply of dry matches, fishing tackle, and a pocket compass. There is no chance of becoming seriously lost if one sticks to the trails and watercourses.

FIREARMS:

Firearms are not prohibited on the island. The gun taken should be a rifle of 30-06 caliber, or heavier. Pistols, revolvers, and small caliber rifles are only an encumbrance, useless as a means of protection against brown bear. A bear's strength, vitality, and ability to absorb punishment, are difficult for the uninitiated to realize, and the heaviest revolver made is entirely inadequate as a protection should the occasion arise when a gun is needed.

CLOTHING:

The following clothing is recommended for men and women visiting the area for an extended trip:

Rubber foot gear or well oiled, waterproofed leather shoes, at least ten-inch tops.

Leather camp slippers to be worn while other foot gear is being dried.

Wool socks, to be worn over cotton or silk if one desires.

Light weight wool or part wool underwear, although cotton or silk is usable if outer clothing has sufficient warmth. Wool retains more warmth when wet than other materials.

Pants or breeches of tough material that does not wet through too easily and which retains warmth if wet. Khaki or canvas over wool underwear, and wool over cotton or silk underwear. Suspenders are recommended as wet trousers are quite heavy to be supported by a belt.

Light wool shirt and water proof hat.

Rain coat, light weight if desired.

A traveler must expect to be out in more or less rain, and clothing should be adaptable. A complete change, except shoes and hat, should be carried.

SPORTSMANSHIP:

Do not catch more fish than you can use. Leave some for the other fellow.

Leave a clean camp, a clean record, and a dead fire.

Report fires to the nearest Forest Officer.

Familiarize yourself with the game laws before leaving. Secure a copy from the Alaska Game Commission.

Don't think there is no law of God or man north of fifty-four.

Do not mark or deface signs, cabins or other improvements. They are placed there for your convenience.

Boats are to be returned to the places from which they are taken. If a boat trip is made involving more than one lake, the return trip should be made the same way in order to return each boat to its proper place. This is imperative.

Headquarters for the Alaska Region of the Forest Service are in the Federal Building, Juneau. Officers having supervision over various portions of the Tongass National Forest may be found at Juneau, Petersburg and Ketchikan. Forest officers are always glad to assist you by giving you information regarding points of interest within the National Forest.



